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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000035

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [KDEM](#) [KU](#) [KWMN](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [KMPI](#)
SUBJECT: PROMINENT WOMEN'S ACTIVIST ON DISSOLUTION RUMORS
AND THE FUTURE OF KUWAIT

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, Alan G. Misenheimer, for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: CDA met with prominent women's activist Rola Dashti on January 6 (NOTE: Dashti will attend the Women's Round-table Discussion on Democracy and Development on January 12 with POTUS. END NOTE). Dashti told CDA that she expects the Parliament to be dissolved prior to the scheduled grilling of the Minister of Education on January 8. However, Dashti stated that she does not believe that dissolving Parliament is the solution to the current political turmoil. She stated that both the Parliament and the Cabinet need to be changed in order to ease the political tension and resolve current issues. Dashti also commented on the lack of vision for Kuwait's future in regards to the line of succession in the ruling family and improvements in basic services and infrastructure. She claimed that although Kuwait's revenues are high, the average Kuwaiti family is not seeing any of the benefits. END SUMMARY

DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT IS IMMINENT

¶2. (C) On January 6, CDA met with Dr. Rola Dashti, a prominent Shi'a women's activist and candidate in the 2006 parliamentary elections. Dashti stated that the dissolution of Parliament was imminent, corroborating rumors and speculation heard from other sources. She said that Parliament would likely be dissolved before the scheduled grilling of Minister of Education, Nouriya Al-Sabih on January 8. Dashti expressed her belief that the reasons for the upcoming grilling were "nonsense", all related to political vendettas and unrelated to the Minister's performance. According to Dashti, the Amir was likely to dissolve Parliament in order to keep certain members of parliament from creating a disrespectful political scene and using "bad language" in their attacks on Sabih, the only female cabinet member.

DISSOLVING PARLIAMENT IS NOT THE SOLUTION

¶3. (C) CDA asked Dashti whether she would run again for Parliament if the Amir decided to constitutionally dissolve it and hold elections within 60 days. Dashti responded to the question by saying that dissolving parliament would not resolve Kuwait's current political tensions and problems. (COMMENT: Although Dashti did not answer the question regarding her candidacy directly, it is highly likely that she will run again if elections are held. END COMMENT) She said that even with a new Parliament, the Cabinet would likely remain the same, thus perpetuating the existing turmoil. She added that a strong Cabinet was needed to counter the "abuse" of democratic power currently being

wielded by the Parliament. In polling done by the Kuwait Economic Society (of which Dashti is the President) in April 2007, over 50 percent of Kuwaitis were not satisfied with the performance of their members of parliament. She believes that that percentage has now grown. She noted that poll numbers reflecting dissatisfaction with the Cabinet's performance were also high.

LOOKING AHEAD, NO VISION FOR KUWAIT'S FUTURE

¶4. (C) Regarding Kuwait's future, Dashti stated that some of the anxiety felt by Kuwaitis regarding the political situation was due to the uncertainty regarding the line of succession of the ruling family. She pointed out that unlike the 1960s, when there were six or seven prominent and well-respected family members and the line of succession was clear, today's Al Sabah has very few active political leaders and those figures are mostly elderly and/or controversial. She said the lack of apparent, qualified successors is an issue that the family should address quickly.

¶5. (C) Dashti also voiced her concern about the disparity between Kuwait's revenues and the manner in which average Kuwait families were living. She said that while GOK revenues continue to grow the average Kuwaiti family does not benefit from this wealth. She lamented the lack of vision or plans for progress in the country's basic services and infrastructure. She remarked that in governmental circles there has been talk for some time about the need to diversify and move away from exclusive dependence on oil revenue but that no action was being taken. According to Dashti, ten years ago the proportion of government revenue from oil was 87 percent and today it is 92 percent.

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